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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

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July 26, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to recommend that you submit an emergency funding request to reverse the continuing deterioration of the U.S. Army's preparedness for war. General Schoomaker, the Army's Chief of Staff, testified before Congress that the Army needs an additional \$17 billion in fiscal year 2007 to repair and replace equipment used in the war. Without these additional funds, Army readiness most likely will continue to degrade.

While we in Washington continue to spend countless hours debating U.S. national security policy in Iraq, the Middle East, and elsewhere, our national security strength – namely, the readiness of U.S. ground forces – has weakened. It is sadly ironic that as we wage war in Iraq, our ability to wage war in other potential conflict areas around the world has been seriously undermined by a lack of attention and commitment. This may be the ultimate cost of and greatest untold story regarding our occupation of Iraq. Here are some troubling facts:

- The vast majority of U.S. active duty combat units not deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan are reported to be at the lowest levels of military readiness. Were you, as the Commander-in-Chief, to call upon them to respond to a crisis, these units would have to reply, "Not ready for duty, Sir."
- The situation for the Army reserves is worse. Almost all of the non-deployed Army Guard and Reserve units are reporting to be at the lowest military readiness levels.

- Army readiness is being driven to these low levels, in part, by a lack of equipment for training and deployment overseas. Yet, thousands of the Army's main fighting vehicles and trucks are lined up at repair depots around the country, sitting in disuse for lack of maintenance funding.
- Ammunition supplies are so low that only units with deployment orders at Fort Hood, Texas are issued ammunition. No other Army units at the base have been issued ammunition for training. Further, other Army bases throughout the U.S. have been forced to severely curtail operations. In some cases, grounds maintenance has ceased completely and custodial services of public buildings have been limited to cleaning only the restrooms.

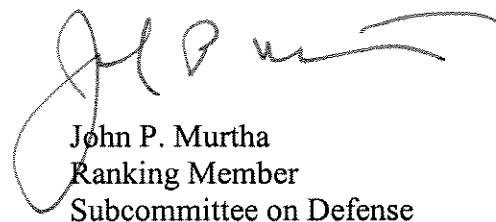
The deterioration of our Army's readiness for war has potentially dire short-term and long-term consequences to American security. Combat units experiencing equipment and personnel shortages cannot adequately train for redeployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. Under-trained and ill-equipped forces face the potential of greater casualties after being called to battle. Over the longer term, our ability to deter future conflicts is undermined by the lack of a strategic reserve to respond to international crises. We can continue to debate the role of our military in Iraq, Iran, North Korea, and elsewhere, but without a military capable of meeting strategic requirements, that debate is pointless.

We believe this national crisis must be addressed now and, as President, your attention to this matter is urgently required. As such, we strongly recommend that you and your Administration prepare for submission to the Congress an emergency funding request to cover the Army readiness and equipment maintenance shortfalls, as well as shortfalls in other U.S. ground forces. Were such a request submitted, you can be sure that we will work hard to secure its timely passage.

Sincerely,



Dave Obey
Ranking Member



John P. Murtha
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense